

FORGING AHEAD WHILE HOLDING FAST TO TRADITIONAL
CRAFTSMANSHIP

ABOUT WESTERN FORGE CORP. Founded in Defiance, Ohio in 1965, Western Forge started out manufacturing torque wrenches. After relocating to Colorado Springs the following year, Western Forge decided to take advantage of the high altitude and low humidity optimal for steel production and expand its offerings to include screwdrivers, punches, chisels, and more. In 1976, they shipped their 100 millionth screwdriver. Today, they manufacture tools for a variety of clients around the world in addition to producing all of the US-made Craftsman tools for Sears.

THE CHALLENGE. Like most companies, Western Forge has weathered some rough patches over the last few years. A depressed economy coupled with rising demand for lower quality, less durable tools manufactured in low-cost countries have threatened the company's stability. HR Manager, John Quarles, said that one of the most satisfying elements of his job is the ability to "see, hold, and touch a real product at the end of the day." Similarly, when Western Forge was founded in the 1960s, people expected tools to be solid, high quality, and last a lifetime. People didn't mind spending a little extra because we knew that we were making an investment. The current trend toward "disposable" consumerism, poses a threat to Western Forge's core mission—one that they are not willing to compromise.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Western Forge has wisely chosen to face these economic and cultural challenges by staying true to their principles and finding new and innovative ways to weather the storm. To that end, Manufacturer's Edge, part of the MEP National Network™, provided customized training, consulting, and coaching to help them implement Lean 5S, Kanban, and other such techniques for improvement in order to stay current, minimize waste, and unify their workforce in order to recover, rebuild, and revive the Western Forge legacy of quality.

"By partnering with Manufacturer's Edge we were able to ensure that ALL our employees had a baseline of manufacturing knowledge that is necessary to be successful in this continually changing world."

-John Quarles, HR Manager

RESULTS



\$4,000,000 increased/retained sales



Cost savings of \$150,000



25 new/retained jobs

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